

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR) : (a) Yes, Sir. Information has since been collected and is given below.

- (b) (i) Bank of India has informed that at their Opera House Branch 22 accounts reportedly of benami type were alleged to have been opened.
- (ii) State Bank of Saurashtra has informed that 4 (four) accounts of Fort Branch, 2 (two) accounts of Darbargadh (Bhavanagar) branch and 1(one) account of Nilambaug Chowk branch reported of benami type were alleged to have been opened. Department of Enforcement is investigating the details regarding four accounts of their Fort Branch.
- (iii) Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has informed that according to Standard Chartered Bank, 14 (Fourteen) accounts of their Dr. D.N. Road Branch, M.G. Road Branch and Chowpatty Branch came to adverse notice for heavy cash deposits and/or remittances against suspected fraudulent documents.
- (iv) RBI has reported that according to Sangli Bank they do not have benami accounts at its Fort Mumbai Branch.

(c) Bank of India and State Bank of Saurashtra have informed that branches had opened these accounts only upon fulfilling the laid down guidelines such as obtaining proper introduction and following norms for depositing cheques and permitting withdrawals. Hence, no action is deemed necessary against officials concerned for opening those accounts. RBI has informed that according to Standard Chartered Bank all the fourteen accounts were duly introduced by other banks or by existing account holders. However, subsequent verification of some of the addresses given in the account opening forms revealed that these were addresses of business centres where there had been arrangements by the account holder to get the mail. In some cases the account opening procedures had not been strictly completed with and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken by the bank. However, there was no evidence of collusion of staff with account holders.

RBI has informed that to check the incidence of benami accounts the banks have been instructed to introduce a system of obtaining photographs of persons authorised to operate the new deposit-accounts with effect from 1st January, 1994. Further in terms of letter dated 17.10.94 all the public sector banks have been advised by RBI to get independent confirmation of addresses of account holders in all cases.

Bank of India, State Bank of Saurashtra and Standard Chartered Bank have reported that instructions are issued to all the branches from time to time to strictly follow the laid down guidelines for opening new accounts and also monitor all the newly opened accounts closely for any suspicious transaction.

Oil Exploration

5088. SHRI P.R. DASMUNSI : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to allow participation of Indian Public Sector Petroleum Companies in the Equity participation programme in abroad to float the companies business with overseas arrangements;

(b) the special measures taken in this regard;

(c) whether the total approach as envisaged by the Government in the Seventh and Eighth Five Year Plans for ultimate self-sufficiency in the oil exploration programme step by step had not taken off; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor and the remedies ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU) : (a) and (b) ONGC Videsh Ltd. (OVL) is engaged in pursuing opportunities for acquiring equity oil abroad. It had entered into Production Sharing Agreements for exploration in Vietnam, Yemen, Egypt and Tunisia. It is also exploring for contracts in Kazakhstan, Iraq etc.

(c) and (d) In the VII Plan the exploratory drilling targets in terms of wells were achieved by ONGC, though there was shortfall in meterage. In the VIII Plan the targets in exploratory drilling could not be achieved. Govt. has announced various rounds for participation by private companies in oil exploration. Recently the New Exploration Licensing Policy has also been announced to significantly boost exploration efforts in the country. The endeavour for going into deep water exploration and continuing exploration in frontier basins, in addition to undertaking new technology areas like Coal Bed Methane, are some of the initiatives to augment exploratory efforts in domestic acreages in the IX Plan.

[Translation]

Beedi Workers

5089. SHRI DADA BABURAO PARANJPE : Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) whether thousands of beedi workers from almost every part of the country had organised a rally in Delhi during March on call from Akhil Bhartiya Beedi Workers Federation;

(b) if so, the details of their demands; and

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM) : (a) Yes Sir.

(b) and (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Eastern Gandak Hydro Power Project

5090. DR. M.P. JAISWAL : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether all units of Eastern Gandak Hydro Power Project at Balmiki Nagar in Bihar set-up with the loan of Japan Government have started functioning;